



Department of Fish and Game  
Office of Spill Prevention and Response

## Major Oil Spills and Incidents Involving OSPR

### Vessels

**Apex Houston Oil Spill** – January 28, 1986, the tank barge *Apex Houston* lost a hatch cover while being towed from the Shell Oil refinery in Martinez to Long Beach, spilling an estimated 25,800 gallons of crude oil along the coastline of Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, and Monterey counties. An estimated 10,577 birds were killed.

**American Trader Oil Spill** – On Feb 7, 1990, the oil tanker *American Trader* ran over its anchor, puncturing its hull and spilling an estimated 416,598 gallons of crude oil onto the waters and coastline in the vicinity of Huntington Beach. An estimated 3,400 birds were killed. Fish and recreational beach use were also impacted.

**Kure Oil Spill** – In the early hours of November 5, 1997, the *M/V Kure* punctured a fuel tank and spilled approximately 4,500 gallons of oil while docked in Humboldt Bay, Calif. An estimated 3,950 birds were killed. Salt marshes, mudflats, and recreational beach use were impacted.

**T/V Command Oil Spill** – On the evening of September 26, 1998, the tanker *Command* left San Francisco Bay bound for Panama. As it traveled south off San Francisco and San Mateo County coasts, it released an estimated 3,000 gallons of bunker fuel. An estimated 1,500 birds were killed. Shoreline habitat and recreational beach use was also impacted.

**Stuyvesant Oil Spill** – On September 6, 1999, the dredge *M/V Stuyvesant* spilled at least 2,100 gallons of oil into the Pacific Ocean near the mouth of Humboldt Bay, near Eureka. An estimated 2,405 birds were killed. Coastal beaches, fish and shrimp in the water column and recreational beach use were impacted.

**Cape Mohican Oil Spill** – On October 28, 1996, the SS *Cape Mohican*, a Maritime Administration vessel, discharged an estimated 96,000 gallons of fuel oil into a floating dry dock during routine maintenance at the San Francisco Drydock Shipyard. Approximately 40,000 gallons of fuel entered the San Francisco Bay. An estimated 593 birds were killed. Recreational beach use, shoreline habitat and fisheries were also impacted.

**S.S. Jacob Luckenbach Oil Spill** – The *S.S. Jacob Luckenbach* collided with its sister ship and sank on July 14, 1953. This vessel, which was loaded with 457,000 gallons of bunker fuel, sank in 180 feet of water approximately 17 miles west-southwest of San Francisco. It has been leaking sporadically over the years. In 2002, oil associated with several “mystery spills” was linked to this vessel. These include the Pt. Reyes Tarball Incidents of winter

1997-1998 and the San Mateo Mystery Spill of 2001-2002. In summer 2002, the U.S. Coast Guard and the trustees removed much oil from the vessel and sealed the remaining oil inside the vessel. Resources impacted included birds (51,569 estimated killed between 1990 and 2003) and sea otters (eight estimated killed).

**Cosco Busan Oil Spill** – On Nov. 7, 2007, the container ship *Cosco Busan* struck a support tower of the Bay Bridge, puncturing the vessel and spilling approximately 54,000 gallons of oil into the San Francisco Bay. The spill affected birds (an estimated 6,849 died), marine mammals, fish, and habitat (sandy beach, rocky intertidal, salt marsh, eelgrass beds).

## **Pipelines/Refineries**

**Guadalupe Oil Field** – At least 80 plumes of diluent, associated with leaks in pipelines that may have lasted for decades, were first detected in and near the Guadalupe Oil Field at the Nipomo Dunes in January 1988. These leaks have released an estimated 12 million gallons of diluent into the dunes, beach, groundwater, and Pacific Ocean.

**Shell/Martinez Oil Spill** – April 23, 1988, a leaking tank at the Shell oil refinery in Contra Costa County drained approximately 400,000 gallons of crude oil into a nearby creek. The oil then ran into a marsh and into the bay. Resources impacted include wetland habitat and fish.

**Exxon Mobile/Santa Clara River Oil Spill** – On Jan 31, 1991, a pipeline break resulted in the spill of over 74,000 gallons of crude oil into the Santa Clara River near Interstate 5 in Los Angeles and Ventura counties. The spill continued 15 miles downstream. Nearly 300 dead birds and 19 mammals were collected. Fish, riparian vegetation, and other riparian and aquatic animals were impacted.

**Avila I Oil Spill** – On August 3, 1992, a Unocal pipeline break resulted in the spill of approximately 24,200 gallons of crude oil, which flowed down a gully, over a cliff face, and into the Pacific Ocean. The spill impacted birds (84 recovered, including 11 brown pelicans), sea otters (5 oiled) and fish.

**McGrath Oil Spill** – On December 25, 1993, a pipeline break resulted in the release of approximately 87,150 gallons of crude oil that entered McGrath Lake in Ventura County and eventually reached the Pacific Ocean. Approximately 206 birds were killed and riparian and coastal habitats were impacted.

**ARCO/Santa Clara River Oil Spill** – On January 17, 1994, a pipeline break during the Northridge Earthquake resulted in the spill of over 190,000 gallons of crude oil. Oil entered the Santa Clara River near Interstate 5 and continued 16 miles downstream in Los Angeles and Ventura counties. The spill impacted fish, riparian vegetation, birds, mammals, and other riparian and aquatic animals.

**Torch/Platform Irene Oil Spill** – On September 28, 1997, off the coast of northern Santa Barbara County, an undersea pipeline, linking the offshore oil platform Irene with the mainland, ruptured, releasing an estimated 6,846 gallons of oil into the ocean and then washing ashore. Over 700 birds were killed and sandy and rocky shoreline habitat and recreational beach use were impacted.

**Avila II Oil Spill** – Numerous pipeline leaks, lasting several decades, under the beach and town of Avila Beach resulted in an underground plume of oil products. This eventually created a threat to public health and to the environment. Much of the beachfront section of the town was excavated in 1999-2000. Site remediation was completed on Nov. 29, 2000.

**Chevron/Castro Cove** – Intertidal and sub-tidal mudflats near Richmond in Contra Costa County are contaminated with oil and mercury from historical discharges of wastewater and storm water runoff from the Chevron Refinery into the adjacent marsh and cove. Impacted resources include intertidal and subtidal mudflat and associated biota (invertebrates, shorebirds, fish).

**Kinder-Morgan/Suisun Marsh Oil Spill** – On April 27, 2004, a pipeline ruptured, spilling over 70,000 gallons of diesel directly into Suisun Marsh near Roos Cut. Impacted resources included brackish marsh habitat, marsh birds and wildlife (over 30 birds and mammals collected).

## **Trains/Trucks**

**Cantara Loop/Dunsmuir Chemical Spill** – On July 14, 1991, a train accident caused a chemical tank car to fall into the Sacramento River, spilling 19,000 gallons of the herbicide metam sodium. The chemical impacts extended over 20 miles from the spill site to Lake Shasta. The spill impacted instream habitat and wildlife including fish, amphibians, macroinvertebrates, as well as riparian habitat and human recreational use.

**East Walker River Oil Spill** – On December 30, 2000, a tanker truck operated by Advanced Fuel Filtration Systems, Inc. of Corona overturned on State Route 182 north of Bridgeport, resulting in the release of approximately 3,608 gallons of oil, the majority of which entered into the East Walker River. The fuel oiled approximately 10 miles of stream habitat. Instream habitat and wildlife were impacted as was human recreational use. Dead wildlife included one Virginia rail, two dippers, one mink, and six beavers.

## **Chemical Plants**

**Searles Lake** – At Searles Dry Lake near Trona, hypersaline industrial wastewater is discharged into several large ponds. Migrating birds stopping at the ponds have died from salt toxicosis, salt encrustation, oiling, and possibly other causes. Over 2,000 dead birds were collected from January 2000 through July 2005.

**Montrose CERCLA Site** – Between the late 1940s and the early 1970s, the Montrose Chemical Plant discharged an estimated 1,800 tons of the pesticide DDT into Los Angeles

County sewers that empty into the Pacific Ocean. Montrose also dumped hundreds of tons of DDT-contaminated waste into the ocean near Santa Catalina Island. Other Los Angeles area industries also flushed massive amounts of PCBs into the ocean via the local sewer system. The contamination caused breeding failures in raptors, contaminated fish and adversely impacted the marine ecosystem.

## **Mines**

**Iron Mtn. Mine CERCLA Site** – Acid mine drainage from Iron Mtn. Mine in Shasta County runs out of the mine site and into several creeks, reservoirs, and the Sacramento River, impacting many miles of streams and adjacent land. Salmon kills have been noted since 1899. The contamination impacted instream habitat and wildlife (fish, macroinvertebrates), riparian habitat and fisheries (salmon).

**New Almaden Mine CERCLA Site** – Operation of the New Almaden Mine released injurious amounts of mercury into the Guadalupe River watershed and south San Francisco Bay. The contamination impacted anadromous and other fish species, riparian and saltmarsh birds, and aquatic invertebrates.

**Leviathan Mine CERCLA Site** – Since 1954, acid mine drainage (AMD) from the Leviathan Mine has been running out of the mine site and into several creeks, impacting many miles of streams and adjacent land in Alpine County, Calif. and Douglas County, NV. Impacted resources include instream habitat and wildlife (fish, macroinvertebrates), riparian habitat, tribal resource uses, and recreational uses (fishing).